



## News Release

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### **Osteoporosis...Beatable and Treatable**

*New Report Shows Many Utahns Living with Osteoporosis*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – *It's Beatable...It's Treatable* is the new campaign message for the National Osteoporosis Foundation. In Utah, the message is already a reality for many of the 55,000 people diagnosed with the disease. The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) has released a report outlining the results of a 2006 survey that asked several questions about osteoporosis, a degenerative disease that leaves bones prone to fracture.

According to the 2006 Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) of Utahns age 50 and older, females were about seven times more likely than males to have been diagnosed with osteoporosis.

Women can lose up to 20 percent of their bone mass in the five to seven years following menopause, making them more susceptible to the disease. Of those diagnosed, more than half of both sexes reported taking prescription medicine for osteoporosis. The survey also found that fewer men reported that they had ever had a bone density test than females. This difference in testing rates may be due to insurance plans that don't cover the cost of screening for men.

"Sex, age and an individual's measure of body fat, based on height and weight, all play a critical role in determining risk for osteoporosis," said Kevin Condra, spokesperson for the UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program.

Individuals over age 50 are encouraged to consult their physician about whether a bone density screening test is appropriate and, if they have been diagnosed with osteoporosis, to ask whether medication could help treat the condition. Other efforts that can be useful in treating the disease include:

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- A healthy lifestyle with no smoking or excessive alcohol intake
- Participating in weight bearing exercises
- Bone density testing for postmenopausal women
- A balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D
- Eating foods high in vitamin D or taking a supplement

By 2020, one in two Americans aged 50 years or older will be at risk for fractures from osteoporosis or low bone mass. “Most fractures among older adults are caused by falls and in Utah falls are the leading cause of unintentional injury among older adults,” said Condra.

UDOH recommends the following tips to lower your risk of falls:

1. Work with health care providers to assess medical risks for falling, including:
  - Have an annual physical exam and an annual eye exam
  - Review medications for possible side effects and interactions
  - Be screened for osteoporosis and, if recommended by a doctor, begin a strengthening/exercising program.
2. Check your home for hazards and correct problems as necessary, including:
  - Unstable furniture and loose throw rugs
  - Slippery bathroom mats
  - Loose or missing stair railings
  - Poor lighting, electrical cords in walkways, and clutter
  - Lack of grab bars near toilets and in tubs/showers.
3. Be very selective when choosing footwear:
  - Flat shoes with sturdy, non-slip soles and good ankle support are best
  - Slippers are too unstable and should not be worn
  - Wearing socks without shoes is dangerous, especially on wood, tile or other smooth surfaces
  - Avoid shoes with heels and replace old or poorly-fitting shoes.

BRFSS is a state-based system of telephone surveys that collect information on health risk behaviors, preventive health practices, and health care access primarily related to chronic disease and injury. For more information on how to prevent falls, visit

<http://www.health.utah.gov/vipp/olderAdults/falls.html>. Read the osteoporosis report at <http://www.health.utah.gov/vipp/pdf/FINAL%202006%20Osteoporosis%20Report.pdf>.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*